



August 1, 2012

Mr. Brian W. Young
District 3 Engineer
State Highway Administration
9300 Kenilworth Avenue
Greenbelt, MD 20770-1403

RE: Proposed Sidewalk Along MD State Highway Route 355

Dear Mr. Young:

At our meeting on July 9, 2012, the Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers reviewed the proposed plans to extend the sidewalk along the east side of Maryland State Highway Route 355 (Wisconsin Avenue), between Grafton Street and Bradley Lane. As you are no doubt aware, residents in our community, which directly abuts a portion of the proposed sidewalk, have participated in discussions and meetings with State Highway Administration (SHA) representatives regarding this proposed sidewalk. The plans for this sidewalk have been expanded from our residents' original request for a one-block sidewalk connection from Grafton Street to Hesketh Street. This proposal would have allowed residents along Hesketh Street to access points located farther south, including the crosswalk to the opposite side of Wisconsin Avenue, the Friendship Heights Metro station and community retail.

Although we support the installation of a sidewalk that will provide safe pedestrian access along this corridor to Bradley Lane, we are concerned with the large number of trees that are currently proposed for removal in order to accommodate the sidewalk. The Bethesda Chevy Chase Master Plan denotes this road link on Wisconsin Avenue as the '*Green Mile*'. SHA officials have advised that you will provide a one-for-one replacement of any removed trees; however, these newly planted replacement trees are not likely to restore the *Green Mile* effect for many decades to come, and it is still unknown whether sufficient space will remain for these replacement trees along the east side of the public right-of-way or whether they will need to be planted in other locations within the community.

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One specific area of concern to us is the proposed removal of four large Holly trees at the end of Hesketh Street, which have been identified on your proposed plans as "shrubs". These are far from *shrubs*. These Hollies are approximately fifteen feet in height and provide the only buffer to residents who live at the west end of Hesketh Street. We urge you to explore the feasibility of either transplanting these mature trees slightly east of the proposed sidewalk or a slight modification to the layout of the sidewalk to ensure preservation of this valuable buffer.

Of more general concern is the seemingly quite arbitrary commitment to a fixed, eight-foot width for the sidewalk the full distance from Hesketh to Bradley. During Village officials' and other communities residents' walk with SHA staff along the route, we learned that to accommodate trees destined for removal, the walk could be both squeezed to six feet in width and gently diverted. We understand that the eight-foot criterion is intended to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists, but find that a six-foot width now and then along the route would be safe and tolerable.

Overall, the Village Board of Managers unanimously supports the installation of this sidewalk; however, our support is conditioned upon SHA's thorough assessment of the proposed design with the goal of preserving as many healthy trees as possible, including the stand of mature Holly trees located at the end of Hesketh Street and our review of the final plans. We firmly believe that this worthwhile project can be pursued while preserving as much of the *Green Mile* as possible.

Sincerely,



Patricia S. Baptiste
Chair, Board of Managers

cc: Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers
Ms. Shana R. Davis-Cook, Chevy Chase Village Manager
Mr. Michael W. Younes, Chevy Chase Village Director of Municipal Operations
Mr. Porter Wheeler, Chair, Chevy Chase Village Traffic Committee
Ms. Kate Mazzara, SHA, Assistant District 3 Engineer - Project Development
Mr. John Gover, SHA, ADA/Bicycle Compliance Team Leader